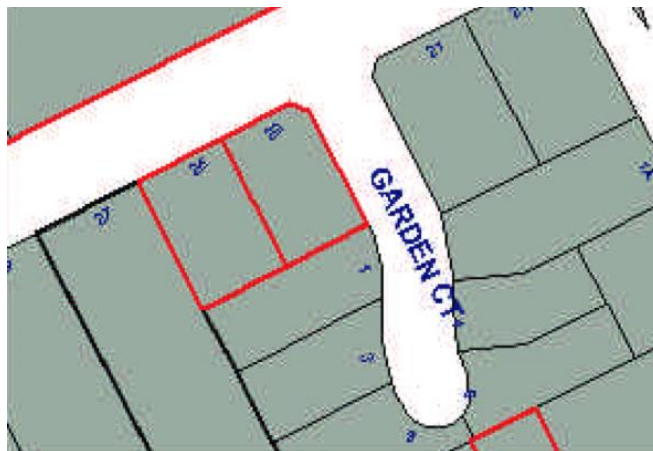


City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Mount Tabor Flats
Other names: -

Citation No:
2081



Address: 23 Dickens Street, Elwood

Heritage Precinct: St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs

Category: Residential: Flats

Heritage Overlay: **HO7**

Style: Interwar: Mediterranean

Graded as: Significant

Constructed: 1936

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Designer: Archibald Ikin

Amendment: TBA

Comment: Revised citation

Significance

What is significant?

Mount Tabor, the two-storey, rendered brick flats designed in a Mediterranean-style by Archibald Ikin and built in 1936 for a Mrs. Weiden, at 23 Dickens Street, Elwood are significant. The low rendered front and side fence also contributes to the significance of the place.

Non-original alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

Mount Tabor at 23 Dickens Street, Elwood is of local representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Mount Tabor is representative of the work of Archibald Ikin, who designed a number of flats within the City of Port Phillip during the inter-war years. Mount Tabor is a fine application of the Mediterranean-style applied to this building typology. The raised parapet with pressed cement balusters is a distinct element that is commonly found on Ikin's work in this style. (Criterion D)

Mount Tabor is of aesthetic significance as a fine example of a block of two-storey inter-war flats designed in a Mediterranean-style. The flats have materiality and detailing synonymous with this style that includes hip roof forms clad in terracotta tiles, cuboid forms faced in render, and recessed and projecting balconies. Of note is the curved balcony, that in addition to contrasting to the cuboid massing of the flats, addresses the corner of Dickens Street and Garden Court. These elements are embellished with detailing also

characteristic of the Mediterranean-style including Classically-inspired pressed cement balusters and squat Tuscan columns supporting arched wall openings. (Criterion E)

Thematic context

Victoria's framework of historical themes

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

Port Phillip thematic environmental history

5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.2 Shaping the suburbs (5.2.2 Private development), 5.3 Diverse Housing (5.3.5 Higher-density housing)

History

Contextual history

The early twentieth century saw a marked decline in the viability of large mansions across Melbourne's suburbs in general, but it was particularly felt in the more affluent inner southern suburbs such as St Kilda and Brighton, where land was highly sought-after by a new generation of homebuilders seeking smaller detached dwellings, duplexes or flats. The trend toward higher-density living in St Kilda began with the conversion of mansions and terrace houses into boarding houses in the early 1900s and continued with the first purpose-built flats that appeared at the beginning of World War I. A 1919 newspaper article noted:

It was held to be no longer necessary to labour with a house and all the domestic drudgery that entailed when by borrowing Continental ideas, people who could afford it could live in flats... Land has become so valuable the villa of the Victorian days, in a crowded thoroughfare, no longer shows anything like an adequate return of interest on the land's present capital value. It is more profitable to pull the house erected thereon down, and to erect flats. When the flat became popular in England the experiment was made in St Kilda, and it did not take long to discover there was a genuine demand for flats (Prahlan Telegraph, 18 October 1919, p.4)

Higher-density housing in the form of boarding houses paved the way to flat development. Flats first appeared in Melbourne around 1906 and slowly spread to the suburbs. They followed a strong pattern of development, appearing close to transport routes, particularly along or within walking distance of tram routes, to allow easy travel to the city. With their proximity to the beach and parklands, good public transport networks and seaside character, the suburbs of St Kilda and Elwood were especially popular locations for flats. Flats became a dominant characteristic of St Kilda and Elwood, and still make up a high percentage of dwellings in those areas. They include some of the earliest surviving flats in Melbourne, some of the best examples of architectural styles and types of flats, and as a group demonstrate the increasing popularity of the lifestyle of flat living from the early twentieth century (TEH).

There was huge growth in flat development in St Kilda and Elwood in the 1920 and 1930s, attracting migrants, single people, and people of diverse sexuality. In 1920 there were 527 purpose-built flats in 92 blocks in St Kilda municipality. By 1925 this had increased to 884 flats in 164 blocks, including large complexes such as the Ardoch flats in Dandenong Road. By 1935, despite a slowing of development due to the Great Depression, there were more than 2,800 flats in over 500 blocks. A further 2,000 flats were added by 1940; however, the onset of World War II slowed development. Nonetheless, by 1947 St Kilda contained 5,500 purpose-built flats, a quarter of all flats in Melbourne (TEH).

Mount Tabor Flats

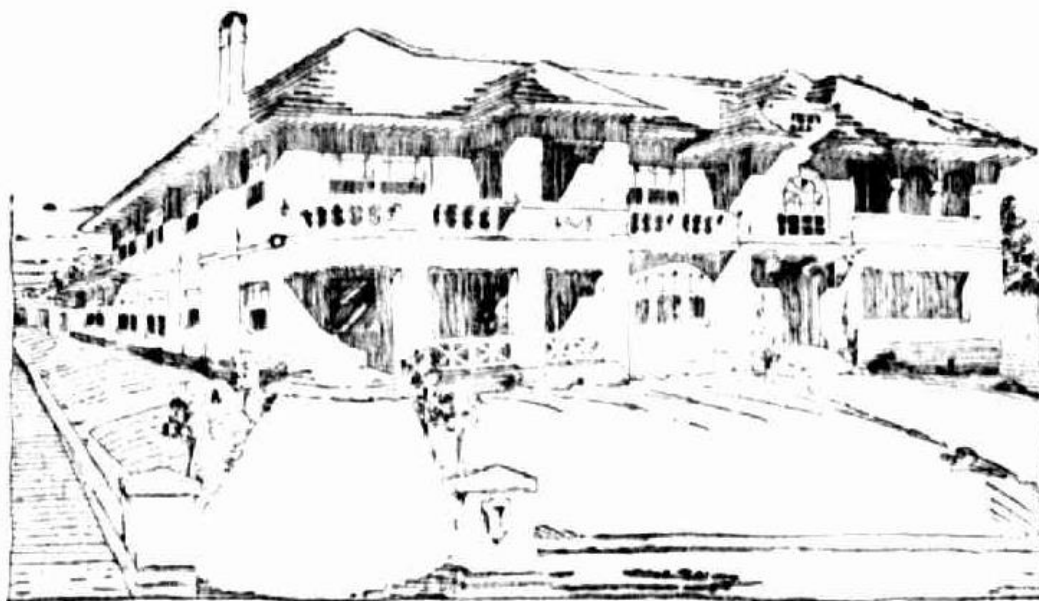
This area surrounding the St Kilda Botanical Gardens has been a desirable residential neighbourhood since the Gardens were first established in 1860 and by the end of the nineteenth century Blessington, Tennyson, Dickens and Herbert streets were lined with substantial villas, and mansions set in large grounds.

With the proximity to tram routes along Carlisle Street, Brighton Road and Mitford Street, and access to the beach and public gardens and shopping centres as well as the nearby school in Brighton Road, this area became a popular location for flats and some of the first flats in St Kilda were constructed here toward the end of World War I. These included Clarendon, designed by Joseph Plottel and constructed in 1915 at 26-28 Blessington Street, and two blocks by Howard Lawson at 44 (Clairvaux) and 46 Blessington Street, constructed in 1917. Some of the early mansions such as St Albans (74 Blessington Street) and Himalaya (10 Tennyson Street) were also converted to flats around this time.

This property at 23 Dickens Street was once part of a nineteenth century mansion estate known as Chesterfield, which traced its origins to 1864 when the architectural firm of Crouch & Wilson called tender for a villa residence for William Welchman. Chesterfield is shown on the 1905 MMBW plan of this area as a large villa near the corner of Tennyson Street, accessed by a short driveway from the street corner with formal landscaped gardens extending to the west. By 1909 Chesterfield had been acquired by warehouseman George Tye and after his death in 1934, his family subdivided the property. The mansion was retained on a reduced allotment and the subdivision to the west created a further seven allotments, five fronting a new cul-de-sac, Garden Court, and two fronting Dickens Street, which became the present numbers 23 and 25 (Heritage Alliance, 2007:2).

The flats at 23 Dickens Street were constructed in 1936 for the owner, Mrs. Weiden, to a design by architect, Archibald Ikin of Caulfield (*The Herald*, 'Flats planned for garden outlook', 25 November 1936, p.22). Pepper & Chenoweth was the builder (BP). They were named after Mount Tabor (SM), which is a mountain in Israel.

Unlike many other flats, Mount Tabor was purpose built for the owner and contained flats of varying sizes. A lower flat, on the corner, occupied by Mrs. Weiden, contained seven rooms, while the others were in a range of sizes with the smallest containing four rooms. Each flat had either a verandah or sun balcony with views of the gardens (*The Herald*, op cit).



Artist impression of the flats. Note the low front fence (*The Herald*, 25 November 1936, p.22)

Archibald Ikin, architect

Archibald Ikin was active during the interwar period and his career in Port Phillip is represented by several houses and flats. Like many of his peers, in the 1920s and early 1930s his designs were influenced by the popular historical revival styles – his preferred style being Mediterranean, sometimes with Arts & Crafts details. In 1933 he designed The Royal, which is one of the earliest examples in Port Phillip of the Moderne style, and thereafter his flats were either in this style or Mediterranean with the notable exception of Venezia Court (see below).

Other flats by Ikin in Port Phillip include:

- Biarritz Court, constructed 1927, 360 Beaconsfield Parade, St Kilda West (Citation 196).
- Tintern (1928-29) 2 Redan Street, St Kilda (Citation 784). Mediterranean style flats.
- Baynton (1929) 3 Robe Street, St Kilda (no citation). Mediterranean style flats
- Granada (1930) 34 Tennyson Street, Elwood (Citation 934). Mediterranean style duplex.
- The Royal (1933) 1 Robe Street, St Kilda (Citation 788). Unusual Moderne/Art Deco style flats.
- Strand Court (1933) 8A Dickens Street, Elwood (no citation). Mediterranean flats.
- Venezia Court (1934) 355 Beaconsfield Parade, St Kilda West (Citation 421). Flats with unusual Venetian Gothic influence.
- Masefield Court (1934) 115 Brighton Road, Elwood (Citation 440). Mediterranean style flats.
- House (1935) 8 Dickens Street, Elwood (no citation). Mediterranean style, very similar to Strand Court.
- Twenty One (1937) 21 Southey Street, Elwood (no citation). Moderne flats.
- Flats (1939) 43 & 45 Westbury Street, St Kilda East (no citation). Pair of Moderne flats.

References

Heritage Alliance, *Heritage assessment. Nos 1, 3 & 5 Garden Court, Elwood*, 2007

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan no.1385, dated 1905

O'Hanlon, Seamus, 'Home together, Home apart: Boarding house, hostel and flat life in Melbourne c.1900-1940', PhD Thesis, History Department, Monash University

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) **Version 1, July 2020**

St Kilda Council building permit (BP) no. 9365, 18 June 1936

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 1940

Sawyer, Terry, (1982) 'Residential flats in Melbourne: the development of a building type to 1950', Honours thesis, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne

Description

A two-storey, block of rendered brick inter-war flats, designed in a Mediterranean style, with a hip roof clad in terracotta tiles and smooth render walls above a brick base. The flats are situated on a prominent site on the southwest corner of Dickens Street and Garden Court, opposite the St Kilda Botanical Gardens. The flats have a shallow setback from Garden Court, and the setback from Dickens Street is deeper and is consistent with the flats to its immediate west. A low boundary fence extends along the street boundary, with a splayed pedestrian gateway at the corner, and two further entries facing Dickens Street. The fence is rendered with a brick base on its walls and capped piers that are taller at the pedestrian gateways, which contain letterboxes and have wrought iron gates.

The main Dickens Street elevation has two small projecting bays that form entrance porches and stairwells to the flats, and these flank a central bay with a bow window on the ground floor. Above this bow window is a balcony and this projects to the front of a pair of timber frame double-hung sash windows. The upper

sash of the windows, as do other windows on the flats, have glazing bars that form a glazed border on the sash.

Detailing is eclectic across the façade. This includes a large arched wall opening (now enclosed with glass) on the first floor, and a pronounced parapet projecting up at centre of the hip roof and its eaves with an inset balustrade detail. To the right of the bay are recessed balconies on both levels, the upper balcony has a loggia expressed with three arches that are supported by squat columns. The lower balcony has a simple rectangular opening and beside this is a wall with gate within the side setback. The left projecting bay is more restrained in character, with a hip roof and square/rectangular wall-openings, with a small rendered wreath on the spandrel. To its side a curved verandah, that forms a balcony on the first floor, that has a balustrade of pressed cement balusters. This the only embellishment of note on this (east) corner portion of the façade.

The side (east elevation) that faces Garden Court is relatively austere in comparison with the Dickens Street elevation, sharing materiality and a similar window detailing, apart from casement windows on both levels that flank a chimney. A newer double-hung sash window has been fitted on the first floor at the southeast corner, which does not have the glazing bar detail that is found on the other windows of the flats. A pair of single garages are accessed from Garden Court, and these have a corbelled parapet with a scalloped profile at one end. A door, within a rendered wall, separates the garages from the house. The rear of the flats is relatively austere and has red face brickwork.

The building is in good condition and has a relatively high degree of external intactness.

Comparative analysis

The inter-war Mediterranean style is related to the Spanish Mission style, but is intentionally designed with subtler features, in a simple yet elegant form. Derived from the coastal architecture of Spain and Italy it was well-suited to St Kilda and Elwood's seaside location and was a popular style for flat developments. Aesthetically, the massing and restrained character of the style underlines a relationship to the Georgian Revival, but the basic difference is the way in which the buildings are designed to respond to sunlight. Balconies are common, deep porches shade entrance doors and the eaves lines are more prominent, and the classical detailing tends to be more playful than that of the Georgian style. Typical details include pergolas, balconies, arcaded loggia and a formal entrance, with sidelights and highlights, while Tuscan columns appear in verandahs and porches. The exterior is lightly bagged or cement-rendered. Large double-hung sashes often have small panes with narrow wooden glazing bars, sometimes with louvered shutters.

Mount Tabor is one of several flats or houses in the Mediterranean style designed by Ikin. It is a fine example with materiality and detailing synonymous with this style that includes hip roof forms clad in terracotta tiles, cuboid forms faced in render, and recessed and projecting balconies. Of note is the curved balcony, that in addition to contrasting to the cuboid massing of the flats, addresses the corner of Dickens Street and Garden Court. These elements are embellished with detailing also characteristic of the Mediterranean-style including Classically-inspired pressed cement balusters and squat Tuscan columns supporting arched wall openings, and margin glazing to the windows that shows the influence of the related Georgian Revival style. A distinctive and unique feature (also found on other Ikin buildings including Masfield Court, Strand Court and the house at 8 Dickens Street) is the shaped parapet with an inset balustrade detail, which pierces the roof, often above a projecting bay containing a balcony or stairwell.

Ikin's Mediterranean flats compares with the Mediterranean style flats built (and presumably designed by) E. Jennings & Co, which include Colombo Court, 52A Acland Street, St Kilda (1927, Citation 389), Harley Court, 52 Acland Street, St Kilda (1927, Citation 390), Corinthian, 5 Robe Street, St Kilda (1933, Citation 789), and Maison Parisienne, 122 Brighton Road, Elwood (1932, Citation 2424).

Other Mediterranean style flats in Port Phillip include Southey Court, 41 Milton Street, Elwood (1925, B.S.W. Gilbertson architect, Citation 805), Ormond Court, 1 Glen Huntly Road, Elwood (1926, B.S.W. Gilbertson architect, Citation 411), and Hawsleigh Court, 2B Hawsleigh Avenue, Balaclava (1928, Hugh

Philp architect, Citation 2010) and Las Palmas, 43 Mitford Street, Elwood (1929, J.H. Soderberg, Citation 2069).

Mount Tabor is also representative of buildings incorporating a large flat for the owner, which became popular during the 1930s. In 1931 Ikin designed the Granada Flats at 34 Tennyson Street, which originally comprised a two-storey residence for the owner, H.G. Granat, with a single storey flat attached at the rear. Immediately north of Granada is Yvonfuray, designed by Leslie J.W. Reed in 1934 (which originally contained one large owner's apartment on the ground floor and two smaller rental apartments above), and Theorose, constructed in 1940 for Theodore and Rose Duneav at 6A Southey Street, Elwood.

Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay. Specific controls (external painting, internal alterations etc.) are not required (OR SPECIFY IF THEY ARE).

Primary source

Peter Andrew Barrett, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2021

Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, *St Kilda 20th century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

Other images



